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17 March 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Dissemination Control Branch, DD/CR

FROM : Chief, Publications Staff, ORR

SUBJECT : Release of CIA/RR GM 64-1, China's Border With the USSR Sinkiang, February 1964, Secret, to Foreign Governments

1. It is requested that the attached copies of subject report be forwarded as follows: 25X1C

#89 - 93
#94
#95 - 97
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#99, 100
#101
#102
#103

[redacted]

2. All ORR responsibilities as defined in the DDI memorandum of 13 August 1952, "Procedures for Dissemination of Finished Intelligence to Foreign Governments," as applicable to this report, have been fulfilled.

25X1A

[redacted]

14 Attachments

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Copy No. 3

GEOGRAPHIC INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

CIA/RR GM 64-1
February 1964

CHINA'S BORDER WITH THE USSR
SINKIANG

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

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NO FOREIGN DISSEM

Approved For Release 2000/05/11 : CIA-RDP79-01006A000100360001-7

CHINA'S BORDER WITH THE USSR: SINKIANG

The 1,850-mile boundary between the province* of Sinkiang and the USSR divides the Chinese-ruled eastern fringe of traditionally Islamic Turkestan from the larger Soviet-controlled portion that extends as far west as the Caspian Sea. The boundary is based on two sets of documentation. The portion north of Kizil Jik Dawan (Wu-tzu-pieh-li Shan-k'ou or "Uz Bel" Pass, 38°38'N-73°45'E) is defined by treaties and agreements that were concluded between the Russian and Chinese imperial governments during the 19th century in order to establish the China - Russia boundary from Mongolia to the Khanate of Khokand (Ferghana). This delimitation was complicated and prolonged by the necessity for Chinese reconquest of the province in 1876-79 after the prolonged Muslim rebellion that began in 1864.

South of Kizil Jik Dawan the China - Russia boundary was delimited by the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1895 that aligned the Afghan boundaries so as to prevent Russia from having a common frontier with India. This treaty located the China - Russia boundary in the Pamirs along the line of the Sarikol Range. It also defined the China - Afghanistan boundary, reserving to Afghanistan the open upper portion of the Wakhan Corridor (sometimes known as the Wakhan Pamir) and reserving to China the Taghdumbash Pamir. The latest available Chinese Communist maps still show the China - USSR boundary south of Kizil Jik Dawan as indefinite, although the alignment does not differ markedly from the definite boundary shown on Soviet maps. The Chinese Communists may be less concerned with the alignment, however, than with the defective treaty basis for it, which offends national pride because no Chinese statesman participated in its drafting. The China - USSR boundary is between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and separate republics of the Soviet Union, although no supporting territorial or boundary agreements between the PRC and individual republic governments are known to exist. The governments of these republics presumably will assent to any territorial changes made on their behalf by the Moscow government in future boundary agreements with the PRC.

Between 1758 and 1800 the Manchus installed selected groups of Mongols, Manchus, Daghors (Tahurs), Sibos (Hsi-po), and Soluns (now classed with Sibos) at key places in the Tekes, Ili, Boro Tala, Emel', and Kobuk River Valleys. Descendants of these settlers have remained in these predominantly Kazakh areas and have probably been more effective than inanimate boundary markers in making obvious the working limits of "original" Chinese sovereignty and thus reaffirming the Chinese position.

The Border Area

For most of its length the boundary between Sinkiang and the USSR follows or crosses mountains. These mountains separate the large interior drainage basins characteristic of Central Asia. Only in the few areas where the boundary crosses stream valleys at lower elevations are appreciable concentrations of population found in the immediate vicinity of the border.

From the trijunction of the China - Afghanistan - USSR boundaries at the end of the Wakhan Corridor, the boundary between Sinkiang and the USSR extends northward to the area of Irkeshtam, following the Khrebet Sarykol'skiy and connecting watersheds that divide the rugged and deeply dissected mountains of southwestern Sinkiang from the Pamirs of the USSR. The "pamirs" are treeless, glaciated valleys at elevations of 12,000 to 14,000 feet, filled with alluvium and detritus and rimmed by higher snow-crowned peaks. Although these valleys lack timber and cultivation, pasturage is abundant. Snowfall is light, but winds and low temperatures make the region inhospitable in winter. Transborder movement is restricted to passes except where the border traverses an area of lakes and low relief extending eastward from Kizil Jik Dawan.

Northeastward from Irkeshtam to the lofty mass of peaks and glaciers centered on the peak Khan Tengri (elevation 22,853 feet), the border follows the major southern range of the multitiered Tien Shan. Elevations in most of this sector range from 12,000 to 15,000 feet, and the border is permanently snow covered for about one-fourth of its length. Rivers in the border region tend to parallel the border; their valleys sustain a sparse population of Kirghiz nomads. Several passes and transborder stream valleys facilitate movement between the numerous occupied valleys on the USSR side and the occupied fringes of Kirghiz country in the uplands on the Sinkiang side. Prevailing northwest winds lose most of their moisture before they cross the mountains into Sinkiang. Consequently, the growth of steppe grasses on the Chinese side of this section of the border is not sufficient to support a large nomadic population, but summer meltwaters from the high mountains nourish large oases.

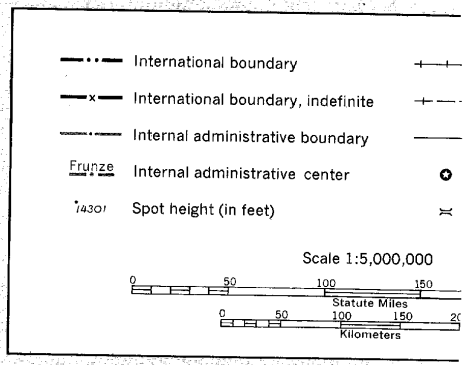
Northward from Khan Tengri, the border crosses the broad interior valleys of the east-flowing Tekes River (elevation about 5,800 feet at the border) and the west-flowing Ili River (elevation about 2,130 feet at the border), both of which are sheltered by successive east-west trending ranges of the Tien Shan. It then turns eastward along the 130-mile ridge of the Dzhungarskiy Ala-Tau to reach the south-draining trench known as the Dzungarian Gate (elevation about 700 feet). The good water supplies and productive soils of these valleys and of the valleys of the Kash and Kunges Rivers east of the boundary support extensive agriculture and stockraising. Transborder movement is convenient along the foothills of the Tekes and Ili Valleys.

Between the Dzungarian Gate and the trijunction of the China - Mongolia - USSR boundaries, the Sinkiang boundary crosses a broad area of mountains, lakes, and deserts. The topography here varies from high ridges and sharply defined peaks of Alpine appearance to elevated tablelands and low hill areas. Mountain elevations range from 6,000 to 10,000 feet, and the larger valleys lie at 1,500 to 3,500 feet. The west-flowing Emel' River (elevation about 1,450 feet at the border) and Kara Irtish River (elevation about 1,475 feet at the border) cross the border in broad valleys that are important as corridors for movement. Sparse but varied vegetation is found in the mountains and higher hills. The lower hills and valleys are desertlike and unfavorable to agriculture except in such favored locations as T'a-ch'eng and the sheltered valleys on the southern flank of the Altai Mountains, where enough water is available to support shrubs, grasses, and clumps of trees.

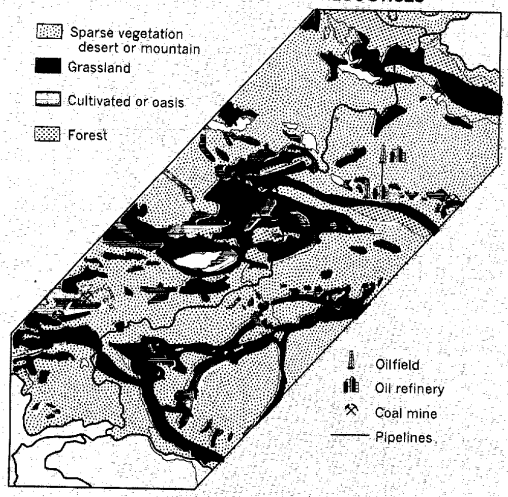
* In this memorandum Sinkiang is referred to as a province in the geographic sense -- a distinct part of a country. Politically, it is an "autonomous region," a special type of province established for dealing with minority groups. Sinkiang was incorporated into the Chinese Empire about 1760 and was made a political province in 1884. Since 1955 it has been officially called the Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region.

CHINA-U.S.S.R. BORDE

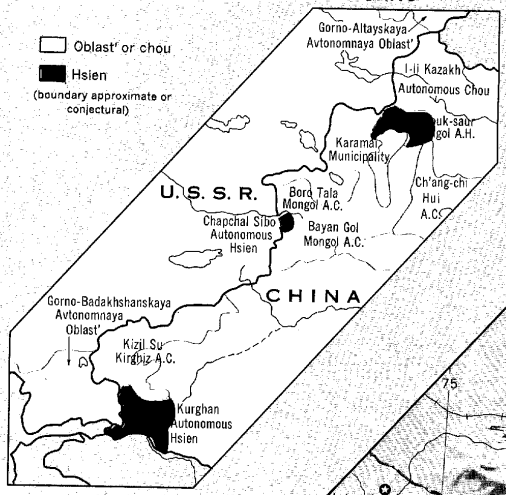
ORIENTATION



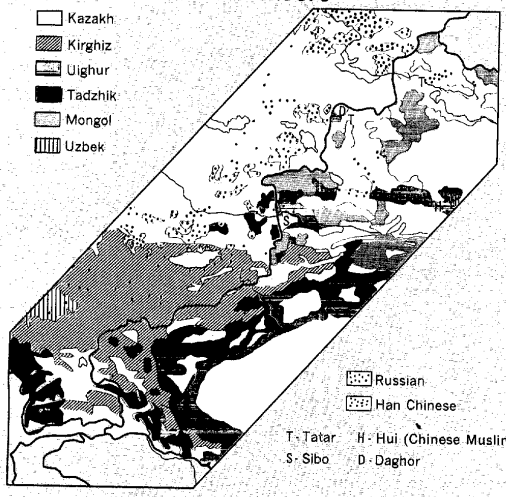
VEGETATION - ECONOMIC RESOURCES



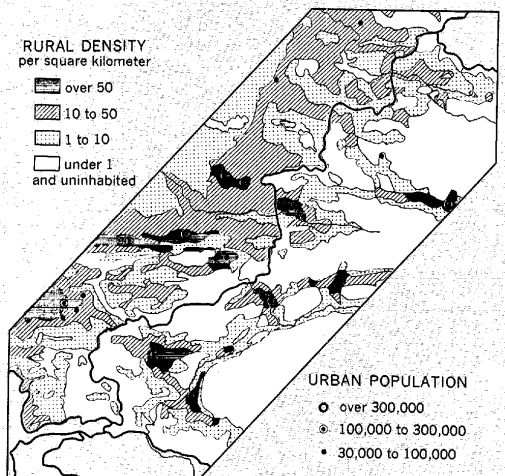
SELECTED ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

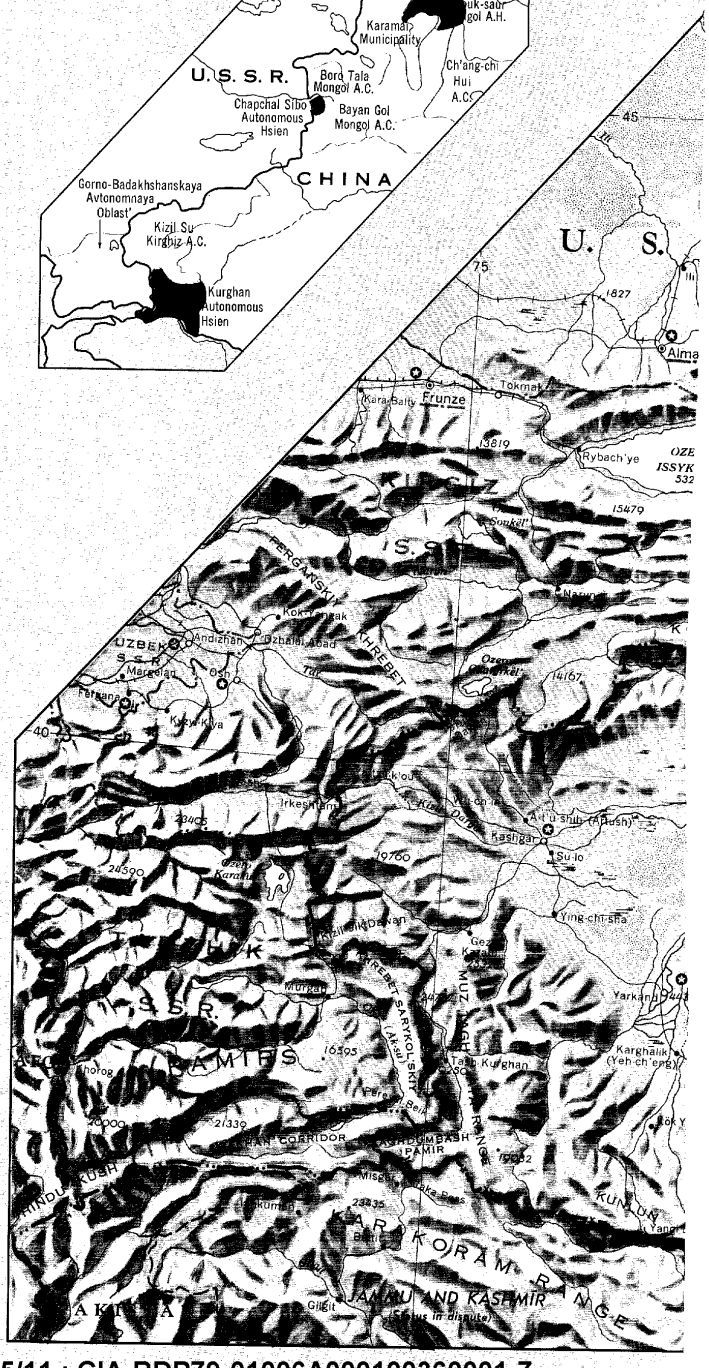


ETHNIC GROUPS



POPULATION





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NAMES AND BOUNDARY REPRESENTA
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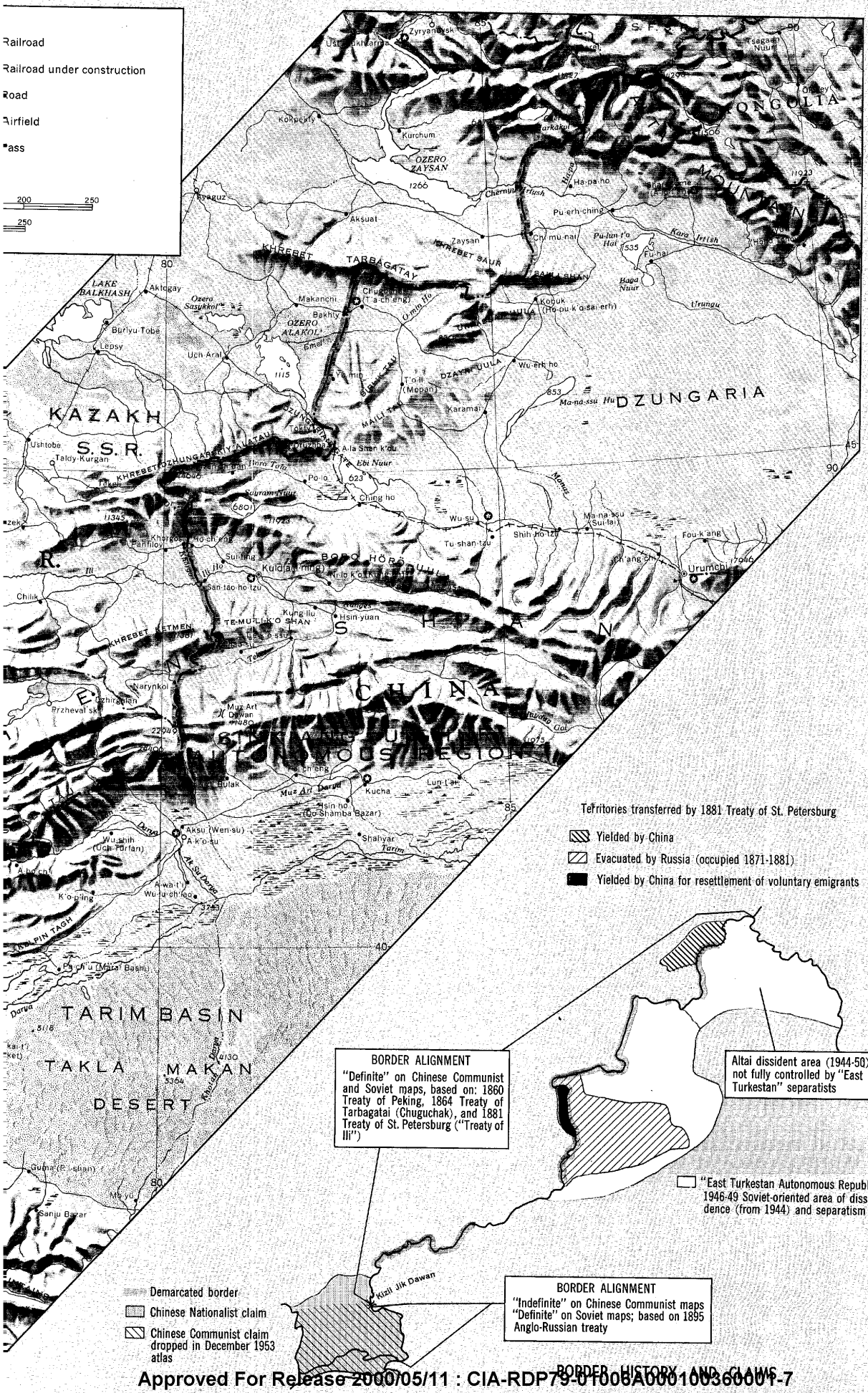

a religiously motivated anti-Soviet "East Turkestan Republic" with administrative seat at Kashgar, which existed between November 1933 and June 1934. A 1944 uprising in the Kuldja area, under the leadership of revolutionaries trained and inspired by the USSR, led to the creation in 1946 of an anti-Chinese "East Turkestan Autonomous Republic," which dominated the Kuldja and Chuguchak areas until it was finally eliminated in 1949 at the time of the Chinese Communist takeover. Although Sinkiang's non-Chinese peoples lack the political cohesiveness to capitalize on their Muslim religious and Turkic linguistic ties without outside assistance, these ties help to sustain an inclination to sinophobia with which the Peking regime must cope.

Prospects

Several factors contribute to the inherently adverse Chinese strategic position in Sinkiang. The physical orientation of Sinkiang and its isolation from China Proper tend to weaken the ties of the province with Communist China. The polyglot population, traditionally vulnerable to subversion, is unsettled. Economic and social aspirations in the western region of Sinkiang are difficult to keep dissociated from those in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakh SSR. A large proportion of the population, agricultural and pastoral resources, and most of the petroleum industry of Sinkiang are concentrated inconveniently close to the boundary with the USSR. Completion of the Soviet portion of the Aktogay-Lanchow Railroad has increased the strategic advantage of the USSR because the railroad now terminates at a point on the border where it outflanks adjacent parts of the frontier; Soviet military forces would be capable of rapidly isolating the various regions of the province from each other and from the rest of Communist China. The 36,000 regular Chinese Communist troops estimated to be stationed in Sinkiang (1.4 percent of the total ground forces in Communist China) are able to control the border in critical sectors, keep internal order, and provide guidance and support for the Public Security forces and the SPCAG. They are, however, obviously too few for defense.

Recent history does not suggest that the USSR covets Sinkiang as real estate. Soviet interest in this hard-to-govern province has been expressed historically through economic penetration of the province and through political measures designed to keep the semi-colonial Soviet domains in Central Asia and Kazakh SSR insulated from outside influences. The Chinese Communists, nonetheless, are steadfast in their efforts to control and sinicize the province, whatever the degree of Soviet sensitivity regarding such activities near the border. The outcome of the possible territorial negotiations with the USSR recently forecast by Chou En-lai may have an unanticipated depressant effect. The prospect, however, is for Sinkiang's continued involvement in the basic hostilities between the two powers.

The established transborder transportation routes are limited all-weather, gravel highways that cross the border at Chi-mu-nai, Bakhty, Khorgos (Ho-ch'eng), Turug Art Dawan, and Irkeshtam. The Kuldja area has convenient highway and river connections with Alma-Ata, in the USSR, but is relatively isolated from the rest of Sinkiang. Its only convenient outlet to Dzungaria and eastward is by a mountain road near the boundary, which can easily be blocked. A limited all-weather route from Kuldja to A-k'o-su (Aksu) via the Muz Art Dawan (elevation 11,840 feet) is still incomplete, and the alternate route via Kucha apparently is still in use. A system of roads extending northward from Wu-su serves the remote towns, administrative centers, and state farms of western Dzungaria and the Altai Mountains region. In the Pamirs to the south a motorable road connects Tash Kurghan (P'u-li) with the highway junction point of Murgab in the Oksu (Aq Su) River Valley of the USSR. Autumn and winter are the best times for surface movement on plains and in valleys, although roads across high passes may be closed by winter snows. Floods of meltwater also may close highways in mountains and in marshy areas during the spring and early summer.

Truck transportation is supplemented by seasonal waterborne transportation on the Ili River below San-tao-ho-tzu, a border transshipment point, and on the Kara Irtish River below Pu-erh-ching.

The extensive system of airfields and surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites in Soviet Central Asia is not matched in Sinkiang. Domestic civil air service connects Urumchi with the border area towns of Sharasume (A-lo-t'ai), Karamai, Chuguchak, Kuldja, Kucha, A-k'o-su, and Kashgar. There is no international air service. Scheduled flights from Urumchi and Kuldja to Alma-Ata have been discontinued.

Population Factors

Composition and Distribution

About three-fifths of the population of Sinkiang lives within 150 miles of the China - USSR boundary. The ethnic composition of this zone is comparable to that of the province as a whole except for the virtual absence of Hui and a lower proportion of Han Chinese. The population of Sinkiang and of Soviet Central Asia and Kazakh SSR in 1958 and 1959, respectively, by principal census groups, is tabulated below. Turkmen (981,000 in the USSR in 1959) and certain other peoples not in Sinkiang are omitted from the tabulation.

Census Group	Sinkiang a/ (1958)	Soviet Central Asia and Kazakh SSR (1959)
Uighur (Turki)	4,000,000	93,000
Han Chinese	610,000 b/	3,000
Kazakh	500,000	3,232,000
Hui (Chinese Muslims)	140,000	21,000
Mongol	60,000	0 ?
Kirghiz (Kirgiz)	50,000 to 68,000 ?	962,000
Tadzhik	15,000	1,386,000
Uzbek	13,000	5,973,000
Sibo (Hsi-po)	11,000	0
Russian	8,000	7,376,000 c/
Tatar (Tartar)	3,350	780,000
Manchu	1,000	0
Daghor (Tahur)	2,000	0
Unidentified	120,000 ?	.

a. The population of Sinkiang presumably was 7 million in October 1962, 6,480,000 in 1960, and 5,550,000 in 1958. These figures may be projections from the 1953 census figures of 4,873,000.
b. Possibly does not include the 200,000 to 300,000 members of the Sinkiang Production and Construction Army Group (SPCAG) and their families.
c. Includes Ukrainian and Byelorussian.

About one-fourth of the inhabitants of the 150-mile-deep border area live within and north of the Tien Shan. The Ili Kazakh Autonomous Chou -- in the Tien Shan, western Dzungaria, and the Altai Mountains -- has a population of more than 1 million, an increase of about 30 percent since 1955. Within the Autonomous Chou, the Ili region has about twice the population of the Chuguchak (T'a-ch'eng) and A-lo-t'ai (Altai) regions combined. About one-third of the people in the north are city or town dwellers engaged in mining, transportation, construction, and other occupations; another one-third are settled rural inhabitants engaged in agriculture, grazing, mixed farming, and stockraising; the remainder are nomads or ex-nomads.

South of the Tien Shan, on the desert fringes of the Takla Makan Desert, the population consists almost entirely of oasis-dwelling Uighur farmers, augmented by a small but growing percentage of Chinese colonists on state farms in reclamation areas. Only about 10 percent of the inhabitants are town dwellers, but 40 or 50 percent live in intensively cultivated, irrigated oases, close to towns and bazaars where rumors and news originate. The Yarkand, Kashgar, and A-k'o-su oases have the principal concentrations of population. In parts of the surrounding mountains, smaller communities of Kirghiz and Tadzhiks practice mixed farming and stockraising.

The largest city in the border area is Kuldja, which may have grown somewhat since 1959 when it had a population of 160,000. None of the cities and towns in the border area are as large as Urumchi, the capital and largest city of Sinkiang, with a population of about 400,000 in 1963. The combined population of the 10 or 12 principal cities and towns in the border area probably exceeds 500,000, about one-sixth of the total population there. Most of the remaining five-sixths live near principal trade routes, where they have been exposed to outside influences. This rural population can be controlled physically but is not necessarily unresponsive to the impact of outside events.

Movement

A westward movement of Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Tatars, and Russians from Sinkiang into the USSR has been taking place since 1953; illegal crossing began to become important after 1958. Border controls, although inherently stringent, are relatively easy to circumvent because the physical character and great length of the border make enforcement difficult and because movements of tribesmen with livestock are hard to control. Estimates of the numbers of the non-Chinese in Sinkiang who have migrated to the USSR in the past 3 years range from 25,000 to 100,000. Large-scale border crossings by Kazakhs and Uighurs occurred in the Chuguchak and Kuldja areas in 1962; 60,000 or more Kazakhs reportedly crossed in mid-1962, but some may have returned. Press reports also cite movements during 1963 of substantial numbers of Kirghiz and Tadzhiks from areas near A-k'o-su and Kashgar and on the fringes of the Pamirs. The exodus probably included more than 6,000 ethnic Russians. By now virtually all Russians who entered the province from the USSR since 1917 have again departed.

The movement of Chinese settlers into Sinkiang is an official government program. The Peking regime selects skilled and semiskilled workers, ex-students, and surplus farm and city residents to augment the already large number of ex-military colonists who have been resettled in Sinkiang. The present Han Chinese population is probably between 800,000 and 2 million. Proportionally it constituted some 15 to 30 percent of the total provincial population in 1962 as compared with some 11 to 18 percent in 1958. The number of Chinese immigrants who can be accommodated in Sinkiang is limited by the pace at which productive land for resettlement can be reclaimed or vacated and by the amount of surplus foodstuffs available for nonagricultural labor.

Many newcomers, some of whom are apparently unprepared for the rigors of their new life, are resettled by the Sinkiang Production and Construction Army Group (SPCAG), a quasi-military agency comprised of old combat units grouped in military colonies. The SPCAG, which operates independently of local governments, has relocated in reclamation areas and on scores of state farms (now 149 in the entire province, including 14 agricultural and 4 stockbreeding farms in the Ili River Basin alone) the veterans of the Chinese Nationalist Sinkiang Garrison Forces and the Chinese Communist forces that were in Sinkiang in 1950 and later arrivals. These garrison-type units follow a military system of administration, discipline, and guidance, although their members are disarmed and no longer have a combat potential except as militia. Selected units may possibly be participating now in the reported buildup of the numerical strength of the Public Security forces in the border area. The indigenous people have greeted SPCAG activities, and the movement of Chinese settlers in general, with less than enthusiasm. The many Chinese who participate in local government, however, are the primary targets of resentment.

Economic Factors

The natural resources of northwestern Sinkiang, although relatively limited, make the border area potentially self-sufficient and provide useful surpluses for export. Coal deposits are fairly broadly distributed and are exploited for local use. Petroleum reserves at Karamai, Wu-erh-ho, and Tu-shan-tzu are small. One of the few iron ore deposits in Sinkiang is in the Kunges Valley; the magnetitic ore from this deposit is smelted at Hsin-yüan. Metallic ores found in the border area contain lithium, beryllium, niobium, uranium, tungsten, molybdenum, copper, lead, zinc, gold, and possibly tin and silver. Of the many probable occurrences of uranium-bearing minerals in Sinkiang, four of the five most important are close to the northwestern boundary of Sinkiang -- at Fu-yün, in the Ya-tzu-k'ou (Ulugh Chat) - A-t'u-shih (Artush) area, in the A-k'o-su - Kucha area, and in the Kunges Valley. Present efforts to increase and improve the use of available agricultural and grazing land (including that which can be reclaimed) could, if successful, support a provincial population estimated conservatively to be about 10 million -- an increase of about one-third over the present population. The livestock industry, however, requires large-scale production of fodder crops to replace the loss of grazing lands to agriculture, and the reclamation of marginal lands is slow and laborious.

Sino-Soviet collaboration in Sinkiang was active in the period between the mid-1930's and 1960 and contributed tangibly to the economic development of the province. It facilitated the export to the USSR of a wide variety of animal and agricultural products, as well as mineral concentrates. This export is apparently still continuing, although probably at a reduced level. In 1955-56, for example, two-thirds of the grain exports of the Kuldja and Chuguchak areas went to the Soviet Union, but proportionately more grain probably is now going eastward to the developing Urumchi area, the principal food-deficit region in Sinkiang.

Construction of the Turkestan-Siberian Railroad, which links Soviet Central Asia with the Trans-Siberian Railroad, has had an adverse effect on Chinese interests in Sinkiang. Completion of the railroad in 1930 caused the external trade of Sinkiang to tend to flow toward the USSR to avoid the slow and costly overland freight service to the Chinese railhead at Pao-t'ou, about 1,100 miles east of Urumchi. On the Chinese side of the border the final 298-mile section of the Aktogay-Lanchow Railroad, between Urumchi and the completed Soviet railhead at the Dzungarian Gate (A-la Shan-k'ou), remains unbuilt. In view of the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations, completion of the line seems unlikely at present.

Political Factors

The USSR and the People's Republic of China are ideologically competitive in the border area of northwestern Sinkiang. National self-determination, which is professed as a constitutional right in the USSR and expressed in a federal state organization, is rejected by Communist China, which stresses a unitary state organization as its basic constitutional principle. In practice, therefore, the Soviet territorial system of federated SSR's organized by nationalities is less offensive to ethnic loyalties than the Chinese system of self-administration ("autonomy") for subject minorities, with emphasis on cultural fusion through "national union." In 1957-58 the alleged preference of Uighur and Kazakh spokesmen in Sinkiang for the Soviet system drew blunt Chinese rejection of its applicability to Sinkiang, as expressed in a purge of certain non-Chinese political leaders in 1958.

Separatism is a longstanding political factor in Sinkiang that has taken both religious and anti-Chinese nationalistic forms. Muslim disorders in 1931-35, for example, included the establishment of